



SENATE DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER HARRY REID, NEVADA
(202) 224-2939 • DEMOCRATS.SENATE.GOV

For Immediate Release

Date: June 20, 2008

CONTACT: Nkenge Harmon, (202) 224-8994
Sharon McGill, Stabenow, (202) 224-1437
Alex Glass, Murray, (202) 224-2834
Natalie Ravitz, Boxer, (202) 224-8120
Stephanie Allen, Landrieu, (202) 224-0088
Linden Zakula, Klobuchar, (202) 224-2159

Melissa Schwartz, Mikulski, (202) 224-1122
Katie Laning, Lincoln, (202) 224-5455
Scott Gerber, Feinstein, (202) 224-9634
Ciaran Clayton, Cantwell, (202) 224-8277
Adrienne Marsh, McCaskill, (202) 224-6154

SENATE DEMOCRATIC WOMEN UNVEIL THE CHECKLIST FOR CHANGE

Washington, DC— This week, *Senate Democratic women launched the Checklist for Change website to highlight their fight for middle class families and an affordable American dream.* Senate Democratic Women for Change launched

www.Democrats.Senate.gov/checklistforchange to discuss their commitment to provide equal pay for working people, keep good jobs in America, fight global climate change, restore America's image around the world, and other crucial issues. During the coming months the senators will release videos and other content to communicate the challenges their constituents face all over America and what can be done to help them.

On Tuesday, Senators Barbara Mikulski (MD), Debbie Stabenow (MI), Blanche Lincoln, (AR), Patty Murray (WA), Dianne Feinstein (CA), Barbara Boxer (CA), Maria Cantwell (WA), Mary Landrieu (LA), Claire McCaskill (MO), and Amy Klobuchar (MN) kicked off their effort to focus on not only the macro issues but the "macaroni-and-cheese" issues that confront America's families, small businesses, seniors, students, and veterans.

Senator Mikulski, Dean of the Senate women, said, "We have come together to offer America a check list for change. We are a voice for the women of America. We are the voice for families of America. And we are here to fight for change." She continued, "In the year 2008, women are still earning 77 cents to every dollar our male counterparts make. It's time to put our lipstick on, square our shoulders, suit up and fight. We want equal pay in our check book and we want equal pay in the federal law book."

Senator Stabenow said, "I'm focused on the fact that just since January of this year, 324,000 good-paying American jobs have been lost. Since Bush took over the White House, we have lost 3 million manufacturing jobs in this country. The people of Michigan have taken a big hit from that loss. Meanwhile, those families still have to pay high gas and food prices. We have to end the race to the bottom that is depressing middle class incomes, sending our jobs overseas and

threatening the American dream. We embrace a race to the top that includes exporting American products rather than our jobs.”

Senator Lincoln followed, “I challenge those on the other side of the aisle to stand with us not against us. As the richest, most powerful country in the world we owe it to the working families and taxpayers of this country to remove the uncertainty that looms over them when an illness strikes. At those times, people pray and worry about when their family member will get well. They shouldn’t have to pray and worry about how they will afford the necessary treatment and medical bills. I support the Checklist because making health care affordable for all Americans is a change worth fighting for.”

Senator Murray stated, “On every woman’s refrigerator checklist is to take care of her family first. And nowhere is that priority more important in this country than with military families, those who have sacrificed for all of us. Yet, this Administration, time and again, has ignored those families to whom we owe so much. You can bet that on our Checklist for Change, we’re going to make sure that those men and women and their families that have sacrificed for us are number one when it comes to taking care of them when they come home.”

“I have come to believe that one of the major items of any checklist for change should be restoring America’s credibility in the world today,” Senator Feinstein said. She went on to say, “This great country has always been called a beacon of hope because people all over the world look to American justice and American human rights for inspiration. But now under this president that beacon has been dimmed. The time has come for change; the time has come to restore this great nation’s credibility as a moral and a just nation, dedicated to liberty and to justice.

Senator Boxer said, "Restoring our credibility in the world also means becoming a leader once again on the environment. We must reverse the dangerous, anti-environmental policies of this Administration and work with a new Administration to bring back the health protections the American people deserve, as well as finally lead on global warming. We owe nothing less to our families, to our children and our grandchildren."

At Tuesday’s press conference Cantwell stated, “Obviously the energy crisis is no longer a future problem. It is today’s problem. For too long, the energy policy in the United State’s Senate has been stuck in second gear by those who don’t want to make an investment in renewables. And it has been stuck by a White House whose only direction for an energy policy, seems to be in reverse. Well, the Democratic women are here to say that we are going to change the agenda.”

Senator Landrieu focused on the need to prepare American communities for future disasters. She said, “One item on our checklist is a FEMA that will work for America. A FEMA that serves as a partner with individuals and businesses to rebuild their towns and cities – whether on the Gulf Coast or in the Great Plains along the Mississippi, in Iowa or in Sacramento. We cannot wait much longer. People’s lives, futures and dreams have been put on hold because of a federal government that is too weak to respond – a federal government that does not believe in being the muscular, bold leader that we need in times of crisis. We want a different approach. We want an approach that does not waste taxpayer dollars, but uses them wisely to help people gain their footing again.”

The Checklist for Change highlights the need to spend tax dollars wisely. Senator McCaskill commented, “This Administration and the other party has taken spending to a new art form. They have driven us into an economic ditch. And it is imperative as we fight for this change that we prioritize spending taxpayer money in a disciplined way; in a way that is accountable to the hard-working people out there that earned that money.”

Senator Klobuchar said, “Our checklist for America ends where it begins: With the family checkbook. In the last seven years, the average middle class family’s wages have gone down \$1000, but their expenses have gone up \$4500. This means an annual income loss, every year, of \$5500. American families deserve an advocate for them. And we need not only change for the agenda, but we need to put a little bit of change back in the American family’s checkbook. This session, we stood up for middle class families by increasing the minimum wage for the first time in ten years, making college more affordable, taking on the special interests, from the oil companies to the toxic toy manufacturers. But so much more needs to be done.”

During the coming months, the senators will continue to highlight their Checklist as they demand change for America. “This is the list for all of America. We are so focused on this list and making sure the people across this country understand that we as Democratic women are united in getting these things done,” said Senator Lincoln.

###

CHECKLIST FOR CHANGE

✓ PROVIDE EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

Last May, the Supreme Court delivered a blow to the fight against workplace discrimination for women, and all American workers, when it ruled that workers are barred from filing pay discrimination claims shortly after an employer first decides to discriminate, even when the discrimination continues. This ruling, which extends to pay discrimination based on race, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability, sends the wrong message about the value of equal pay for equal work and ignores the realities of pay discrimination. That is why we are committed to passing the *Fair Pay Restoration Act*. At a time when the American worker is struggling to make ends meet, ending pay discrimination is a goal worth fighting for.

✓ KEEP GOOD JOBS IN AMERICA

We need a jobs agenda that fights for American workers and small businesses. The recent rise in unemployment has only strengthened our resolve to stem the flight of American jobs overseas. Currency manipulation, unfair trade agreements and the free flow of counterfeit goods from countries like China have put American workers at an unfair disadvantage for far too long. We must repeal tax policies that reward the outsourcing of American jobs and level the international playing field by enforcing our trade agreements. Keeping good-paying jobs in America is worth fighting for.

✓ MAKE HEALTHCARE AFFORDABLE

We support guaranteed affordable health coverage for ALL Americans. That means addressing the underlying causes of rising costs in the health care systems as a whole – the only way to control costs in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Expanding coverage for small business would also go a long way toward making sure that millions more Americans have access to medical care. Affordable health care for all is worth fighting for.

✓ TAKE CARE OF OUR MILITARY FAMILIES AND VETERANS

It is our duty as Americans to provide our men and women in uniform with the care and benefits they have earned. Our veterans need access to enough staff and medical professionals, with the right training, to care for their needs. It means treating the psychological wounds of war with the same importance as the physical wounds. It means access to job training and a G.I. Bill that serves the needs of a new generation of veterans. Our nation's military families and veterans are worth fighting for.

✓ RESTORE AMERICA'S CREDIBILITY IN THE WORLD

We cannot lose sight of American values as we strengthen our national security. We need to restore the reputation and credibility of our nation around the world. In addition to changing the course in Iraq, we must also close Guantanamo Bay and end America's use of torture. These three steps, if taken, would send a major signal around the world that Change is on the way. The restoration of America's credibility on the world stage is worth fighting for.

✓ PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

The health of our families and the strength of our economy depend on our stewardship of the environment—this means clean air, safe drinking water, and the preservation of our planet. For too long, we have neglected the issue of global warming. Science tells us that time is not on our side, but if we address global warming now, we will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, spur an economic renaissance that will create millions of new, green jobs, and ensure that our children and our grandchildren can enjoy the wonders and beauty of our environment.

✓ MAKE AMERICA ENERGY INDEPENDENT

When it comes to moving our nation toward energy independence, we believe that the cost of inaction is severe. We must reverse seven years of the Bush Administration's oil-friendly policies, which have resulted in a quadrupling of oil prices and more than a doubling of gas prices. We must fix the root causes of the high gas prices so these solutions have a real, lasting effect. This can only be accomplished by investing in clean and affordable alternative-energy sources, which will create good American jobs. A reduction in our nation's dependence on oil is worth fighting for.

✓ PREPARE FOR FUTURE DISASTERS

We must ensure that our federal government provides the resources and flexibility to deal with potential future disasters, be they natural or manmade. While we hope we never have to face a catastrophe like Katrina or Rita again, we must be prepared. We must reform both FEMA and the Stafford Act to better manage a swift and effective response and recovery. We also must develop safe and efficient evacuation plans for all of America's communities and equip our nation with a strong first responder communications system. Ensuring that our nation has the tools it needs to address a future disaster is worth fighting for.

✓ ENFORCE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

We must improve federal oversight of how the nation's tax dollars are spent. This can be accomplished by providing Inspectors General greater flexibility and more independence to oversee the actions of the departments and agencies under their purview. We must also have tougher oversight of government contracts, including eliminating no-bid contracting and banning contractor bonuses in the case of unfinished or unsatisfactory work. The restoration of fiscal discipline with taxpayer dollars is worth fighting for.

✓ PROTECT THE FAMILY CHECKBOOK

We must enact policies that protect the family checkbook from the squeeze of rising costs and stagnant wages. We need to focus tax relief on middle-class families, including more resources for the "sandwich generation" caring for both children and aging parents. We need sensible energy policies that put the interests of American families before oil cartels and multinational corporations. We need common sense regulations that protect consumers from flawed products or unfair business practices without unduly burdening our economy. The American family checkbook is worth fighting for.